



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 8, MONTANA OFFICE
FEDERAL BUILDING, 10 W. 15th STREET, SUITE 3200
HELENA, MONTANA 59626

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Ref: 8MO

Sharon Westlake
105 Smelter Avenue, NE
Suite 116
Great Falls, MT 59404

Dear Ms. Westlake,

I provide the following in response to your November 20, 2003 letter requesting information addressing Mr. Michael Crill's concerns about asbestos exposure and cleanup issues.

Mr. Crill requests an investigation or audit of alleged abuse or illegal activities with regard to the cleanup in Libby. My suggestion for any or all instances of suspected illegal activities or criminal conduct on EPA's part is to contact the EPA Inspector General. The formal mechanism to make such complaints is through the Inspector General's Hotline at 1-888-546-8740. If criminal or illegal activities of other than EPA are suspected, the appropriate law enforcement officials should be notified.

The tragedy that individuals and families in Libby have suffered as a result of exposure to asbestos through mining processes and contact with contaminated vermiculite is heartrending. For four years, EPA has been working hard to find sources of exposure to Libby asbestos still posing substantial risk to Libby residents and remove them. This unprecedented task is technically challenging, costly, and time-consuming. I have every confidence that the Project Managers are capable professionals who will continue to make good decisions in the face of difficult choices and a less than ideal budget.

It is impossible to remove all the asbestos from Libby. However, I am confident that through the rigorous cleanup plans that are in place and long term operations and maintenance plans that will be developed over the next couple of years with the benefit of local input, Libby will be a safe place to live, work and raise a family.

EPA shares Mr. Crill's concern about notifying the public about the dangers of exposure to Libby asbestos. Fact sheets, news articles and other resources with information about identifying potentially contaminated material, where it might be found, and what to do - or not to do - with it are made available to Libby residents and others. A comprehensive web site with information on a variety of topics related to asbestos and many links to non-EPA educational material can be accessed at www.epa.gov/region8/superfund/libby.



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Please don't hesitate to contact me for additional information. You may also contact the Project Manager, Jim Christiansen at 303-312-6748 or the Community Involvement Coordinator, Wendy Thomi in my office at 406-457-5037.

Sincerely,

Original signed

John F. Wardell
Director
Montana Office